

## HR Excellence in Research Award: 8 YR Report Summer 2020 (Submitted September 2020)



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The University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) received the HR Excellence in Research Award from the European Commission in 2010 and successfully retained it in 2014 after an external review process. As part of our award, we are reporting here on our progress over the last two years against our Concordat Action Plan for 2018-2020. The period 2018-20 covered by the Reflective Plan represents a period of continued significant and strategic change in the provision of support for researchers at the University of Central Lancashire. “Research Excellence” was one of the foundations of the Research Strategy 2018-2020 and is defined as the creation and execution of research that has the potential to be world leading and world changing and recognises the movement towards transdisciplinary working. This will be a continuing and underlying strand for our future strategy which will support the University from 2020 to 2028 (provisional time period).

The people who undertake and support the development of researchers at UCLan are vital to the achievement of the research strategy. As reported in the 6yr report there was an internal review of support available to researchers and that resulted in the newly formed Research Services in 2018, within which was hosted the Researcher Development Unit. With the appointment of a new Vice Chancellor, during the 2019-2020 academic year there has been a review of all Academic Schools and Professional Services at UCLan. The new academic structure has given greater prominence to School Research Leads who will now be at Professorial level and will be able to support and drive the research activity of the School. The School Research Leads are supported by a Faculty Director of Research.

The current HR Excellence in Research programme is being led by the PVC for Research and Enterprise, Prof. StJohn Crean, supported by the Director of Research Services, Dr. Alexis Holden. The operationalisation of the action plans is the remit of the Researcher Development Unit within Research Services and they are supported by the Development Team within Human Resources.

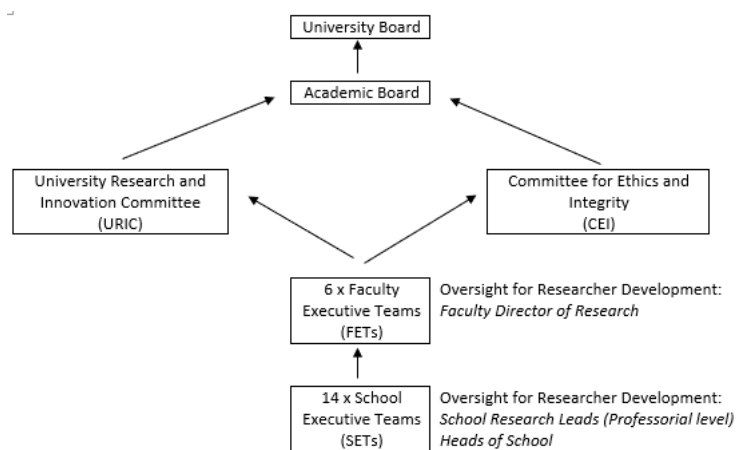
**Key Achievements and Progress** Over the last 2 years there have been some significant developments with respect to supporting researchers with their career and development at UCLan, and a number are listed below.

1. Continuing support for the University-wide Early Career Researcher Forum
2. Establishment of the University-wide Mid-Career Researcher Forum
3. Created a Researcher Development Blog to support greater communication about opportunities and information around career development.
4. The Academic Professional Apprenticeship Scheme was launched providing academics with a number of routes, relevant to level and experience, to achieve their career aspirations
5. Internal research assessment exercises have continued as part of the preparation and development for REF2021 with emphasis on the developing Code of Practice to provide a support pathway for those staff who are not currently eligible for return to REF2021 but have aspirations for inclusion in REF2028
6. Additional documentation to support appraisers and appraisees in discussions focussing on development of research careers and deliverables.

7. University retained its Athena Swan Bronze status.
8. Reworking of the Academic Research Induction Programme into a modular system; the RDU session which specifically focusses on the Concordat to support the Career Development of Researchers, the Researcher Development Framework and highlights resources and opportunities to aid development.
9. Creation of a dedicated section on the HR web pages with all the institutional policies and practices specifically for researchers to be able to access, and linking the Researcher Development webpages with those of relevance on the HR webpages.

**Governance Process** The identification, planning, implementation and review of activities proposed for 2020-2022 will be overseen by the Researcher Development Steering Group. (RDSG). The RDSG will report their activities, findings and recommendations to the Faculty Research, Innovation and Ethics Committees as well as the University Research and Innovation Committee. With the new Academic and Professional Services restructures<sup>1</sup> there is a range of individuals who will be available to, and expected to, support the embracing of the Concordat to Support the Development of Researchers. Figure 1. outlines the support available and the reporting mechanisms.

**Figure 1. Reporting flow for Researcher Development**



The responsibility for assuring compliance with the Concordat Principles and supporting the needs of Researchers will rest with Research Services. Research Services will be primarily supported by the Development Team within Human Resources. Other areas of the University which will also be involved are the Centre for Collaborative Learning (CCL), The Careers Service, and the Innovation and Enterprise Service.

**Next Steps and Measures of Success** UCLan will apply to become a signatory to the Concordat by the end of 2020. This will then provide a framework for the University and its employees to build on the progress made in the previous years for researcher development. The senior manager champion for the Concordat will be Professor StJohn Crean, who is the PVC for Research and Enterprise. Broad<sup>2</sup> key activities, as discussed in the 'Action Plan to 2022' will include:

- (i) Review of the membership of the Researcher Development Steering Group, in light of the academic schools and professional services restructure during 2019-2020;

<sup>1</sup> No details of how the restructure will affect the Researcher Development Unit are available as Research Services is still in the Consultation phase of the restructure process.

<sup>2</sup> More detailed activities are stated in the Action Plan to 2022 document.

- (ii) Active promotion of the Concordat to academic researchers;
- (iii) Undertake a gap analysis against the Concordat principles ensuring the academic community are engaged in the process and review;
- (iv) Greater use of Case Studies and Masterclasses to share experience and good practice;
- (v) Aligning data requirements for this Concordat and other concordats to help greater effective and efficient working practices;
- (vi) Publish an annual report which includes the strategic objectives, measures of success, implementation plans, and progress made.

Post submission of the 8yr review documentation, work will start immediately on the revision of the RDSG to enable a preliminary report and action plan to be submitted to the Faculty Research, Innovation and Ethics Committees as well as the University Research and Innovation committee. These will be held during October and November 2022.

Dr Alexis Holden  
Director of Research Services

6<sup>th</sup> September 2022